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│          Game Evaluation Criteria       │
│            (5 Minutes or Less)          │
│                                         │
│   ● Category Biases                     │
│                                         │
│   ● Scale of 1 to 7:                    │
│       ✓ Clarity                         │
│       ✓ Flow                            │
│       ✓ Balance                         │
│       ✓ Length                          │
│       ✓ Integration                     │
│       ✓ Fun                             │
│                                         │
│   ● Strongest Point                     │
│   ● Weakest Point                       │
│   ● One Change                          │
│   ● Comparable Games                    │
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What follows on the next few pages is a clarification of what's on this summary card. After a playtester is familiar with the clarifications, the card above is all they will need to have with them for the sake of reference. I specifically designed this card/criteria with the following purposes in mind:

1. The actual tool being used – i.e. the card above – is small enough for a playtester to be able to hold it in their hand or let it sit comfortably on the table without getting in the way.
2. This criteria will reduce the total amount of time spent by playtesters in providing feedback after playing a game while increasing the quality of feedback given in that time. Often, playtesters spend lots of time "searching for the right words" in giving feedback. This tool helps cut that extra time down. Also, by going for more time efficiency, it helps ensure that all playtesters will get an equal chance to have their say instead of one particularly vocal playtester dominating the post game conversation.
3. This criteria will help playtesters cover all aspects of a game – both good and bad. I've noticed that playtesters can have this habit of fixating on one particular thing about the game while ignoring all else about it. While it's important to point out the main areas that need improvement, this criteria actively requires the playtester to provide feedback about a variety of areas and not just one area.
4. This criteria is a feedback tool that can apply to any kind of game. The categories and questions on this tool can be applied to a eurogame, a war game, an abstract strategy game, a card game, a party game, etc. For example, some of the clarifications of category that follow on the next page mention theme. If theme doesn't apply, then notice how there are other descriptions in the same category to flush out how exactly a game might be considered with respect to that category.
5. This criteria helps provide a paradigm that a game designer can use to evaluate their own game. Game designers, like playtesters can have a bad habit of fixating on things and losing sight of the bigger picture. A designer may be focusing only on the parts of the game that are good while not giving the parts of their game that are lacking their proper weight.
6. This criteria can be used effectively to evaluate a prototype – regardless of what stage of development it is in. Even if the prototype is an early version, these categories and criteria can be used. It's just more likely that the game will get lower scores in the various categories.

Game Evaluation Criteria (5 Minutes or Less)

Category Biases:
1. **Identify the Game's General Category:** (Eurogame / Wargame / Amerigame / Card Game / Dexterity / Abstract Strategy / Party Game / Trivia / Other)
2. **State Personal Biases Towards That Category:** (Whether you tend to like games in that category or not.)

	1 → 2	→ 3 → 4	→ 5 → 6	→ 7
Clarity	Very cumbersome board design / Hard for the players to see what is going on in the game / Rules are very unclear and difficult to understand.	Somewhat cumbersome layout / Rules are somewhat unclear and difficult to understand.	Somewhat streamlined layout / Rules are somewhat clear and easy to understand.	Very streamlined layout / The players can easily see what is going on in all areas of the game / Rules are very clear and easy to understand (no areas of ambiguity).
Flow	Lots of unnecessary procedures / Lots of fiddliness / Lots of cumbersome exceptions to rules / Needs lots of streamlining.	Several unnecessary procedures / Several areas of fiddliness / Several cumbersome exceptions to rules.	Few unnecessary procedures / Few areas of fiddliness / Few exceptions to rules / Mostly streamlined but with a few exceptions.	No unnecessary procedures / Minimal to no fiddliness / Very few if any exceptions to rules / Very streamlined.
Balance	Very imbalanced / Broken / Run-away leader problem / The impact of luck is much too significant for the game to be fair.	More imbalanced than balanced / A few areas work but many have strategic loopholes / Many of the luck elements are too significant but a few are appropriate.	More balanced than imbalanced / Has some small areas with loopholes that need fixing / Many of the luck elements are appropriate but a few are still too significant.	Very balanced game that is fair for all players / No strategic loopholes / Any and all elements of luck in the game are appropriate in their significance.
Length	The game is extremely too short or too long for what it offers.	The game is mostly too short or too long for what it offers.	The game's length is somewhat too short or too long for what it offers.	The game's length is appropriate for what it offers.
Integration	The mechanics and the theme are extremely mismatched / The different mechanical elements of the game do not compliment each other or "fit" together at all.	The mechanics and the theme are somewhat mismatched / Several of the mechanics do not "fit" into the greater whole of the game.	The mechanics and the theme are a fairly good match / A few elements of the game do not "fit" well but most of them do.	The mechanics and the theme strongly compliment each other / The various elements strongly integrate to create a unified game.
Fun	Complete lack of emotional connection or tension throughout the game / Lots of "downtime" / No interesting decisions offered / Very uninteresting theme / The game was not fun to play at all.	Very few moments of emotional connection or tension during the game / Somewhat uninteresting theme / The moments of fun were rare occurrences.	Some moments of emotional connection or tension during the game / Somewhat interesting theme / The game was somewhat fun to play but still had a few areas that were lacking.	Consistent emotional connection or tension throughout the game / Very interesting theme that strongly engages the imagination of the players / The game was very fun to play.

Strongest Point: What was the game's best feature, aspect, mechanic, etc.

Weakest Point: What was the game's weakest feature, biggest drawback, etc.

One Change: If you were to suggest that one change be made to the game, what would it be?

Comparable Games: What other games have you played that are in the same category, specifically the same strategic category, as the game being playtested?

This last point about comparable games, along with the first point about category biases, helps the designer know what kind of game grouping the playtester sees the game as fitting in. This is important for several reasons. If the designer thinks they have designed an intense strategy game and the playtesters are either calling it a light party game or are comparing the game to very low strategy games, then these aspects of feedback can serve as a wake-up call to the designer. On the other side of the issue, if the playtester doesn't have a strong enough vocabulary of other games in that same category to come up with other comparable games, it helps provide some understanding to the designer about just how much credibility to assign to the person providing the feedback as they may not have had enough prior exposure to enough different kinds of games to provide truly informed feedback.

Good luck to us all with our game designs,

-Mike Compton